illustrate the fact of the evil effect to be feared even at the hands of clever artists, when the principle and purposes of an art are forgotten; and as in glass, the beauty of the material despised, and the composition and effect made an outrage to the architecture that affords them a position.

A practical commentary is to be found in the modern glass: in the window over the altar in the Sacrament chapel, the artist has attempted to give additional relief to his subject by darkening the background with deep shadow; then, having perceived his error, he attempts with better success to avoid it in the small chapel behind the high altar, and has kept the windows more equable and light: but still, improved as these are, the student will observe how far deficient in breadth and brilliancy they remain as compared with those in the chapel of the Miraculous Sacrament; and taking all together, old and new, back to the test of his previous study, he will feel himself in a favourable position to judge how far relief by shadow is admissible in painted windows, and at what point it becomes vicious.

In conclusion, I would simply observe, that the windows in the chapel of the Miraculous Sacrament at Brussels are worthy of a visit from every student of glass-painting, being fine in themselves, and a point in the history of the art, but that they might prove dangerous and delusive as models, were it not for the warning supplied by the extravagant errors in the opposite chapel of the Virgin.

F. W. O.

THE WORKING MASONS OF EDINBURGH.

The condition of the working classes in our chief towns has of late begun to assume that prominence in the public estimation which is due to it as one of the most momentous and important questions of the age. In order that the way may be paved towards the future elevation and welfare of these classes, a close and searching investigation into their present state and their past history is not only desirable but necessary; and the public are deeply indebted to those who carry out such investigations in a right and impartial spirit. The *Edinburgh News* has begun a series of articles on this subject, with an interesting account of the working masons, as the most prominent members of the building trades who have made Edinburgh what it is, in material and in structure, as a stone-hewn city. The author of this article takes a rapid glance through the ancient and less modern history of the trade, and then proceeds to give some account of the "building mania," as it was called, whereby the New Town of Edinburgh rose into existence. This took place between 1820 and 1826. Previously, or rather in the beginning of the century, the number of masons in Edinburgh was nearly equal to that of the present year. The wages were 18s. per week in summer, and 12s. per week in winter. In 1815 a period of unusual depression reigned throughout the trade. In that year there were only one or two houses building in the whole of Edinburgh and Leith: there were also not above seventy masons in the town. This, however, did not last. The time was fast approaching which involved the most interesting as well as the most painful period in the history of the trade. The conclusion of the war, and the subsequent improvement in commerce, began at length to exercise their good effects on Edinburgh.

"Speculative building began in 1820. In 1823–4 the mania had reached its height. Streets, squares, places, crescents, sprang into existence with unparalleled rapidity. The ground-rent exacted in some cases was monstrous. Population (or, in plain terms, people to live in the houses) was never thought of. In two years masons' wages rose from 18s. to 28s. per week. Workmen from every conceivable quarter of the country poured into Edinburgh. Old masons, who in 1815 had taken to keep provision-shops, and in other ways to eke out a subsistence, once more resumed the 'mell.' Apprentices of two years' standing have been known to receive 20s. per week. It was computed that upwards of 3,000 masons were at this time fully employed in Edinburgh. Towards the autumn of 1825 the first symptoms of a general break-up began to appear."

Into the minutiæ of this catastrophe we need not here enter: a working mason who had been employed throughout the "mania" thus speaks of the whole affair, so far as regarded the interests of the men:—

"My wages were never less than 26s. more frequently 28s. sometimes 30s. per week. When the crash came in 1826, it was a serious thing for us: 2,000 men were thrown idle in a few months. There were hardly a job to be got; and at the end of 1827 there were not 100 masons left in the town. I have worked for 12s. per week in winter—less the broken time, which generally reduced it to 8s.—and 14s. a week in summer, for a number of years. Many good hands were worse off. The system of tasking or sub-contracting had been introduced by the masters, and was all but universally adopted. I have known excellent hewers, who worked sixteen hours on a long summer's day, and very often slept night after night in the shed beside their stone, receive 9s. for their week's wages. A statement of my own wages, which I carefully kept, gives for seven years an average of 11s. 3d. per week. At length, in 1841, the Masons' Union was established in Edinburgh. In three years we had accumulated an available fund of 4,000*l*. We then agreed to have a general strike throughout the trade. It began in 1845. We kept it up for seven weeks; but the strike was most extensive in Glasgow. The masters, instead of listening to our grievances, although they were closely combined themselves, and met regularly with the view of adjusting the wages, petitioned Parliament to suppress our union as illegal. Some of our best hands were put in jail for conspiracy. Although the best-informed among us now disapprove entirely of strikes, yet we still think our first and greatest combination was right, because our demands were just. We at length effected our object. We abolished sub-contracting: we obtained 18s. per week in summer, and 14s. per week in winter. We have often since had partial turns-out, but only one more general strike, and that was in 1847. This was the time of the railway mania, and our wages had for the last two years stood at 26s. The masters published a decree reducing them to 21s.: we resisted this for three weeks, but compromised for 22s. 6d. There was not more work, however, and the wages soon fell to 20s. per week, or 4d. an hour, at which rate they still continue."

A master mason of the time being gives a very different view of the question, however. He declares that—

"There never existed a worse class of men than the masons of that period. They were dissipated; they were idle: they were insubordinate. * * * They have been known to drive to the shed in a hackney coach, put down their tools, and hurry away to drink. They systematically corrupted the apprentices, who were taught the same habits without cost. Four days a week was a good average of their work. They maintained, among them a parcel of good-for-nothing fellows who did no work, who were furious drinkers and furious spouters, and who were the everlasting cause of sedition and mischief."

Times are totally changed now, however, both with men and masters.

"The old '26 men—now, alas, few and far between,—speak of their masters with respect. They say the Edinburgh builders of the present day are a credit to society. Very often they possess the power of lowering the wages, but they never use it. A better understanding now exists. Let us hope that this improvement in the trade will for ever render impossible the occurrence of such another period of suffering and misfortune."

There are upwards of 800 masons in Edinburgh and Leith at the present time.

"Fully two-thirds of that number are hewers. Almost all the hewers are bred in Edinburgh; almost all the builders are bred in the country. In the whole number there are not more than 100 apprentices. The period of apprenticeship is five years: the wages begin with 3s. and 4s. per week. Masons supply their own tools: a full 'kit' costs from 2*l*. to 2*l*. 10s. and the masters pay for sharpening them. Each mason has his private mark on his tools; and it is curious to what expedients they are sometimes driven for a novel design. A peculiarity, for the origin of which we must look to the masonic superstitions of the middle ages, belongs to the trade, in their mode of notifying the hours of beginning and leaving off work. In place of ringing a bell or blowing a steam-whistle, the functionary who keeps time retires to the back of the shed and creates the singular repetition of sounds popularly known outside as the 'mason's chap.' It is a tradition in the trade that a mason with his mell in the air will let it descend without striking the chisel when he hears the first sound of the signal. The wages at present are 20s. per week; but, making allowance for broken time in winter, and other causes of loss, we doubt if a mason's wages will average 16s. the whole year."

The statistics of "the masons' trouble,"—phthisis from dust in the lungs,—constitutes a painful topic in the history of the mason craft:—

"Dr. Alison has said that 'there is hardly an instance of a mason regularly employed in hewing stones in Edinburgh living free from phthisical symptoms to the age of fifty.' We can go lower than that—we can state from pretty extensive observation, that there are none but suffer from it at forty. We do not, in truth, know ten hewers (working) in Edinburgh above fifty, and only two above sixty. It is to be observed, however, that the celebrated Craigleith stone, of which the New Town of Edinburgh was built, contributed more largely to this characteristic disease than the softer stones at present in use. An old Craigleith man was done at thirty, and died at thirty-five. Our information is filled with melancholy reminiscences of the ravages of this disease. Out of twenty-seven apprentices—fine, young, healthy men—who began with Forsyth at the erection of Cramond-bridge twenty-six years ago, only two survive. Out of 120 hewers who worked at the High School in '27, we know of only ten survivors. In a squad of thirty stout hewers who began the Edinburgh and Glasgow Bank twelve years ago, only the one-half lived to see it finished. *The stone-cutting and carving of the Scott Monument killed twenty-three of the finest men in Edinburgh.*"

By way of prevention, it is recommended to work the stone damp, and to ventilate the work-sheds. Dr. Alison, too, recommends the Edinburgh hewers seriously to wear moustaches and beards, which are said to have been found in practice abroad to act as respirators. Why not use proper respirators themselves? It is useless, however, to urge what we fear few or none will adopt.

It is gratifying to find that the Edinburgh masons are now nearly as noted for temperance as they once were for its reverse. They are also otherwise improved.

"We have met them—by the way you can always distinguish a 'dorbie' at a glance—with a newspaper or a book, sometimes with a plant or a flower to adorn the window-sill of their bed-room. As to the general intelligence of the trade, that is indisputable. They are moderate in their political opinions; they entertain sound views on political economy generally; and, above all, they are profoundly sensible of the duties which they owe to society and to each other."

NOTES IN THE PROVINCES.

Lincoln.—The gas company here have just declared a dividend of ten per cent.

Rickmansworth.—Gas works for this town have been begun and completed in three months. On Thursday before last the opening of the works was attended with festivities, illuminations, fireworks, oratory, &c. Mr. T. Atkins, C.E. of Oxford, was the contractor for the works. On Friday, the workmen in the employ of Mr. Atkins were regaled with a dinner. The mains are now being extended to Batchworth.

Reading.—Parochial schools for Mr. S. Lawrence, of Reading, are in course of erection here to accommodate 300 children, seated at desks, as directed by the Committee of Council on Education. The site of the schools is within the precincts of the ancient monastery of Reading. The style of the school buildings, which is Early English, and the material flint and stone, is intended to harmonise with the interesting remains of the abbey which still exist. The contract is taken by Messrs. Biggs and Wheeler, at 916*l*. The architect is Mr. John Billing.

Uttoxeter.—The small new church of St. Michael, at Stramshall, near Uttoxeter, was consecrated on Thursday week. It is situated on a knoll of ground at the upper end of the hamlet, and has been erected by Mr. Evans, of Ellastone, from designs by Mr. Thomas Fradgley, of Uttoxeter. It is a stone structure, in the Pointed style of architecture, with buttresses, a wooden porch, and a small bell

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